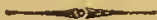


*H. W. Rantia Dec '86*

FRIENDLY WORDS  
TO  
EDUCATED NATIVES.

No. III.

MUST WE BE BAPTIZED ?



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## Friendly Words to Educated Natives.

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### MUST WE BE BAPTIZED?

THERE are those among educated Natives who admit the claims of Christianity upon them, and who even profess to take the teachings of Christ as their chart of life, and who yet persuade themselves that an open profession of their faith is not necessary. God looks at the heart, they say; he demands spiritual worship; we have had enough of external rites; to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, we need the Holy Spirit; no bodily ablutions are of any avail; while we trust in the Saviour and endeavour to walk after the example that he hath left us, we cannot doubt that God will accept us. Did not the prayers and alms of Cornelius find acceptance with God? Does it honour the charac-

ter of God to represent him as rejecting one who regulates his life by the teaching of Christ, simply because he has not had some water put upon him publicly in the name of Jesus Christ? No, it cannot be necessary to salvation; faith in Christ is the only condition of salvation. We are enabled to live quietly with our parents and other relatives, and exercise an influence upon them and show them the beauty of the Gospel. If we were baptized, that would be the rupture of many precious ties that God himself has imposed, and would involve us in a great deal of reproach, discomfort and privation. Looking at these various facts and circumstances, we cannot believe that the benignant heart of our Father-God, would impose as a condition of salvation, a rite of so little real significance.

We would ask the persons who thus argue, to give attention to the following considerations.

The Saviour knew perfectly well what was before his disciples when he sent them forth to preach the Gospel to every crea-

tnre. He told them that they would be hated of all men for his sake. He knew what would be the effect of the reception of his Gospel in families: A man's foes shall be they of his own household; he that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me; I am not come to send peace, but a sword; to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother; the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child. That is, when a member of a family shall believe on me, the other members will do their utmost to hinder his making an open confession of his faith, and if, against all their persuasions, entreaties and menaces, he still goes forward to confess Christ, they will then be ready to disown him and deliver him up to death. The Saviour is indeed the most benignant of beings, and it would naturally occur to his mind that if the young believer would just so far fall in with the prejudices of his people as to avoid being baptized, the yoke would at once become a very easy one. If such a concession could have

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been made he would have made it; he is the last one to require from his much-tried followers any sacrifice that is not absolutely demanded. But there is not the shadow of such a concession. When the risen Saviour gives his great Commission to his disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, he commands them expressly, as they go preaching so to go baptizing, in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit. So long as the Gospel was to be preached, so long was it incumbent that every believer should be baptized; this obligation stretched over the entire Gospel dispensation even unto the end of the world. Lo, I am with you unto the end of the world, and all power in heaven and in earth is given unto me. He knew well what opposition the Gospel would encounter. "Ye shall be hated of all men for my sake." "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." To suppose that Christ, knowing the opposition that would be awakened by a public confession of his name,

nevertheless insisted upon it when there was no absolute necessity for his doing so, is to convict him of the greatest possible irrationality. If Christ is worthy of our confidence in any thing, he is in this thing. If we recognize him as the Saviour of men, we must recognize his statement of the way of salvation as unerringly true. He assures us in the most unequivocal terms that the faith that saves is the faith that ensures obedience. The faith that saves, is the faith that leads us to confess him openly before men.

In the Acts of the Apostles we have an account of the spread of the Gospel to Samaria, Syria, Cyprus, Cilicia, Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, Galatia, Lydia, Bithynia, Mysia, Troas, Macedonia, Achaia, Crete, Melita, Rome, Illyria, Arabia and other countries, and we do not find that any where, any servants of the Lord thought of such an expedient for lightening the burdens of neophytes as the discontinuance of baptism. Yet in all these countries it was often at the peril of their

lives that they thus openly confessed Christ. The gate of baptism was guarded by the apostles as though the holding of the Fort depended upon it. There could not be any greater assault upon that gate, than there was in the first Christian centuries. How is it possible to doubt that this is a matter of vital importance in the Lord's estimation?

As for Cornelius, an apostle was commanded to go to him with the Gospel, to tell him 'words whereby he should be saved'; and on confession of his faith he and his were baptized.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of my words shall pass away, says Christ. He is the Captain of our Salvation, and he is to be the Judge of all, and in view of both considerations we may well give heed to all his requirements.

By baptism we become publicly identified with his cause; declare ourselves his followers; place ourselves under his guidance; declare our purpose to make war upon all that is opposed to his kingdom,



by bearing testimony against it, and by seeking to enlighten those who are deluded. For true Christians are the light of the world, and are like a city set on a hill that cannot be hid. In baptism the believer declares openly that his faith is in Christ alone for salvation, and that he now makes himself over to Christ to be his and do his will. Except a man forsake all that he hath he cannot be my disciple; he is to forsake even his own ideas; One is his Master, even Christ, and the will of Christ becomes his supreme law. The grand thing is of course the baptism of the Spirit, by which we get the power joyously to do and suffer all for Christ; but we cannot have the baptism of the Spirit, without obeying the Master. The disciple is not above his Master.

We are well aware that the cost of openly confessing Christ is often, in India, very great. The greatest possible opprobrium attaches in many cases to such a confession. Nothing can be harder than to have your nearest and dearest relatives

regard you as guilty of the greatest of all crimes, at the very time that you are acting under the highest sense of obligation. Some may think that baptism is a severer test in India, than it ever was elsewhere. But this is not the case. The test was just as severe in the apostolic age, and the language in which our Lord refers to the trials of those who confess him before men, is exactly suitable to those who are called to confess him in India..

We would therefore affectionately invite our friends who stumble at this demand of the Gospel, not to listen to their Native friends or nearest relatives in this matter, and not to listen to their own deceitful hearts, but to do what Christ bids them do, openly confess him before men that He may confess them before His Father, and at the same time to look for a manifestation of Christ that shall effectually strengthen them for all they may have to encounter. They will not look in vain.

No man who, with a true faith in Christ, confesses him openly in the way appoint-

ed, has any occasion to repent of so doing. The word of Christ which promises him a hundred-fold more in this life even, is fulfilled. The very moment that the believer thus gives evidence of his faith, the Lord is ready to meet him with extraordinary blessing. He is suddenly made aware that He who is with him is mightier than all who are against him. He is filled with 'joy unspeakable' and 'a peace that passeth understanding' just when he gives expression of his faith in a public confession of Christ. "The love of God is shed abroad in his heart" when, by his fidelity to Christ, he is cut off from the love of his relations and caste-friends. If there is any exception to this, it is in the case of those who have not been taught what their privileges are in Christ, and who consequently fail to exercise the faith necessary to the reception of these blessings. The Spirit of God given to the believer, is neither more nor less than a befriending omnipotence brought into the region of his corrupt nature to purify, to gladden, to bless, to strengthen. It is the

expression of infinite and abiding help, corresponding to all the demands of our nature. Duty and privilege are indissolubly joined in the narrow path that leadeth unto life.

In other words, faith in Christ means faith in a present, divine helper, strengthening us for every duty of life, and sustaining us under all privations and sacrifices.

G. B.

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